

The Capitalist State

3.1 General autonomous organization by the market and direct organization by the state

Capitalism starts from the dissolution of direct relations between people as a way of organizing social production. It starts, therefore, from dissolving any general conscious organization of social labor based on the subordination of some people with respect to others. It thus gives each special fragment of this labor the concrete form of private labor. The allocation of the total labor capacity of society under its different useful concrete forms is resolved indirectly, in a system that is governed autonomously. It is an autonomous system of social metabolism. In the latter, the material product of labour is at the same time the bearer of the general social relation: the commodity. Social production no longer has as its immediate object the production of use-values, but the production of the general social relation itself, the production of value. And the production of value has its finished form in the valorization of value itself, i.e., in the production of surplus-value. The material product of social labour, the bearer of the general social relation, thus becomes the very subject of social production and consumption, capital. Capital not only produces and reproduces itself, but it produces and reproduces human beings as its personified form of existence. The free consciousness and will of the worker and the capitalist have no other determination than that they are the necessary concrete form of the alienation of the powers of human labor as powers of capital.

The modern state organization of social production assumes the most varied and contrasting concrete forms. But, however diverse its concrete forms may be, this organization is a consciously governed mode of allocating portions of the total labor capacity of society under the various useful forms of labor. It is, therefore, a direct social relationship of general scope that subsumes the conscious and voluntary action of the worker and the capitalist in their condition as free individuals who own commodities.

At first sight, it may seem that the general indirect organization of social production through the exchange of commodities, the market, and the direct organization of social production by the state constitute two modalities of

social relations that can only maintain an external relationship. While the former engenders the consciousness and will of individuals, the latter has these as its immediate condition. The unity between the two social relations would seem to be able to result only from a continuous mutual clash. From the latter it would emerge victorious, now one or the other, with no other need than the strength accumulated by their respective supporters. This appearance has a double ideological expression, whose two legs stand with the firmness of dogma and which in turn reproduce the appearance of an external contradiction. On the one hand, there are theorists who argue that direct regulation by the state does nothing but hinder the normal functioning of indirect regulation by the market. If freed from the former, the latter would bring the development of social production to its fullness. In other words, direct regulation by the state would limit the development of the social productive forces with respect to the potentiality that corresponds to the autonomous regulation naturally proper to the capitalist mode of production. On the other hand, there are theorists who maintain that direct regulation by the state extends the existence of the capitalist mode of production, taking it beyond the limit that naturally corresponds to it in its condition of autonomous regulation of the development of the social productive forces. Despite their appearance as irreconcilable opposites, these two ideological constructions are internally linked from their roots. Both emerge from the same appearance of the process of circulation of capital. In the latter, the relations that individuals establish among themselves in the organization of the production of their lives appear inverted as the fruit of their abstractly free consciousness and will. And it is also from this common root that another conception springs that constitutes the third leg of the ideological inversion of the relationship between indirect regulation and direct regulation proper to the capitalist mode of production. This third leg conceives of the action of the state as the arbitration that protects the market from deviations caused by the violation of its natural laws or by its imperfections of functioning, in pursuit of progress and social equity.

In order to discover the true relation between the autonomous organization of social production through the exchange of commodities and its direct organization by the state in the capitalist mode of production, we need to leave behind these appearances. If we focus on the historical emergence of the capitalist mode of production, we find the action of the state as a key direct social relation in the genesis of the general indirect social relation. In the first place, on the basis of its national cut by the historical development achieved until then, the state stands as the representative of the respective national process of capital accumulation in the international competition that is established between them. Secondly, the direct action of each state within its national sphere is the most powerful modality of formal transformation in the regime of appropriation of the labor of others, within the process of primitive accumulation of capital. It is about the process of dissolving the feudal relation-

ships of personal dependence of the direct producer and transforming them into a general relationship of formal subsumption under capital through the purchase and sale of labor power. But, above all, the direct action of the state plays its role in the process of primitive accumulation as a necessary form of the process of expropriation of the free direct producer of the conditions to produce his life. That is, the process of transformation of the free direct producer into a worker forced to sell his labor power because he is a free individual in the double sense of not being subject to the personal domination of anyone and of lacking the means of production necessary to put his labor power into action on his own. And it is from this appropriation of the productive powers of individual free labor by capital that the whole secret of the historical reason for existence of the capitalist mode of production as a system of autonomous regulation of the development of the material productive forces of society is born.

The capitalist state thus presents itself as having its necessity in the national form in which the accumulation of capital is developed and in the form of direct violence that the process of original expropriation of the free direct producer takes. It would seem, then, that this double formal determination is the obligatory starting point for the study of the state. However, over and above the conditions of its historical genesis, the historical specificity of the capitalist mode of production does not arise from the presence of a direct general social relation. On the contrary, it arises from the presence of an indirect general social relation. Therefore, in order to face the specificity of our object, we need to start by dispensing with any modality of direct assignment of social labor under the different useful concrete forms of it. We are thus confronted with the purest expression of the indirect organization of social production in the capitalist mode of production, i.e., in the very process of exchanging commodities for their value.

The realization of the value of commodities in exchange has as its concrete form necessary that their respective possessors act as the personified consciousness and will of them. That is, as a seller, the owner of commodities must put his five senses into obtaining the greatest possible amount of value for the use value he delivers. Conversely, as a buyer, he must take care to obtain the greatest possible use-value for the quantity of value he delivers.

There is an exchange of commodities that determines the specificity of the capitalist mode of production: the buying and selling of labor power.¹

1. Certainly, it is not the genesis of the general exchange of commodities but the general exchange of commodities itself, which appears as the absolute empire of the indirect social relation, presupposes the general validity of contracts of sale. It presupposes, therefore, the existence of a general legal relationship, which in turn presupposes the existence of a general political relationship, that is, of the state. However, this is not the very specificity of the

In this exchange, the worker appears as the personification of the only commodity he has to sell, his labor power, and the capitalist as the personification of his capital. For the latter, the labour power he buys has no other use value than to put it into action throughout the working day in order to extract from it every last possible drop of surplus labour, materialized in the specific social form of surplus value. Thus, although the purchase and sale of labour-power takes place in an instant, the appropriation of its use-value by the capitalist necessarily extends in time. And only in this course will the realization of the value of labor power be effectively realized. Thus, the capitalist and the worker, who individually have been related to each other as mere owners of commodities in exchange, are linked in a direct relation during the period for which the purchase and sale has been effected. This direct social relation established between them is nothing more than the process of realization of their general indirect relation. Each one retains in it his condition as the possessor of commodities whose value is at stake to realize. The capitalist wants the greatest possible amount of labor to be delivered to him, so as to minimize the value given for the purchase of the worker's labor power. His condition as personification of the need for his capital prevents him from stopping at the consumption of the worker's labor power, even when this consumption implies the annihilation of the worker's very life. On the contrary, it is a matter of his own life and death for the worker to restrict the surrender of his labour-power, so that the value received by it enables him to reproduce it as fully as possible. As a purely concrete necessary form of realizing its indirect general social relation, the direct relation established between the worker and the capitalist in the process of production of capital is necessarily antagonistic in nature. The worker and the capitalist enter into this antagonistic relation, each of them holding the same right as any other commodity owner. This equality of rights with which they face individually in circulation can only be resolved by force. But the unity of the process of capital accumulation imposes, as a normal condition for its own reproduction, the permanent existence of an excess of labour-power in relation to the demand for it, at its value, by the whole of the capitals of society. Thus, the competition among the workers to sell their labour-power individually, on pain of not being able to reproduce their natural life, necessarily tips the balance in favor of the capitalist. Thus, as far as individual circulation is concerned, labour-power is doomed to sell itself below its value. With this sale, the individual worker who comes out of the competition successfully with his peers are able to reproduce their labor power

capitalist state, but of an abstract mercantile state. And it is appropriate to say abstract, because the general exchange of commodities, i.e., the exchange of commodities as a general social relation, is only the fruit of capitalist production based on the extraction of relative surplus value.

immediately. But, in the long run, the constancy of selling below value results in the impossibility of the reproduction of labor power with the material and moral attributes that capital requires of it in order to accumulate. However attractive it may be to each individual capital to sell labour-power below its value, the question is not so simple from the point of view of the reproduction of their cycles as a whole. From this point of view, that is, from the point of view of the total capital of society, it is a circumstance that undermines its capacity for accumulation. Unless, of course, he himself manages to generate a permanently renewed flow of labor power with the appropriate attributes to prey on without having to spend on reproducing it.

Thus, social capital is reproduced by determining the competition that the workers establish among themselves to sell their labor power individually in the concrete form of a direct relationship of cooperation. Competition among the workers thus takes the concrete form of their solidarity in the process of selling their labour power. The sale of labour-power for its value transcends the powers of the individual worker. But it also does so with regard to the collection of workers cut by the private character of each individual capital, and even that of the one cut by the sum of these in each special sphere of social production. And the same is true of capitalists as personifications of their individual capitals. Therefore, the buying and selling of labor power for its value necessarily takes concrete form in the determination of workers and capitalists as classes that confront each other directly, not simply indirectly and individually through the buying and selling of labor power. That is, the sale of labour power for its value, a condition for the reproduction of the mass of labour power which the reproduction of the cycle of social capital requires, has the class struggle as a necessary concrete form of realization.

The commodity form which the general social relation takes in the capitalist mode of production carries with it the dissolution of all direct relations of personal interdependence. It replaces them with indirect relations of general interdependence with respect to things, which take shape in the determination of the consciousness of people as personifications. But the very realization of the accumulation of capital, in so far as it immediately concerns social capital, engenders a direct social relation between individuals who confront each other from the very pole of the alienation of their human powers as powers of capital. Namely, the working class and the capitalist class. And it is this same general autonomous regulation that realizes its own powers, taking concrete form in a direct general social relation that subsumes those that determine each class. That is, in the class struggle.

As a direct social relation, the constitution of classes in their struggle for the conditions under which labor power is bought and sold is an action immediately governed by the consciousness and will of those concerned as personifications. And, obviously, the realization of the value of labor power is only a specific concrete aspect of the process of allocating the total labor capacity of society under the various useful forms of labor. The class struggle is, in essence, the conscious and voluntary collective action in which the organization of social labor is directly realized, as a specific concrete way of realizing its general organization unconsciously by the accumulation of capital. And this unconscious organization immediately makes its way again as regards the specific form that competition between the workers for the sale of their labour-power in order to realize its value must take, i.e., as regards workers' solidarity. It does so in determining the scope of this solidarity through the permanent presence of the industrial reserve army.

3.2 The historical specificity of the state as a political representative of social capital

Like any other concrete form of the autonomous organization of social production, the class struggle expresses its resolution through the conditions in which individual capitals are accumulated. Its specificity, however, arises from being the necessary concrete form of a general conscious organization of social labor as a direct attribute of social capital. To the working class, social capital appears as the direct autonomous expression of the alienated powers of its own social labour. The capitalist class is presented as a social power that escapes the immediate capacity of its members to personify the individual capitals they possess privately. Social capital therefore needs to develop its own specific personification that represents it in the general direct social relation established by the classes in their struggle for the realization of the value of labor power. And this personification must inevitably present itself as the representative of an alienated power that appears to impose itself externally on the free will of the members of both classes. Because of its character as a general direct relation, the class struggle presents the general concrete form of political struggle. So the specific personification of social capital is, above all, a representation of a political nature.

At the same time, we had that the normal flow of capital accumulation takes the necessary form in the existence of an excess of working population over which individual capitals actually put into action. Then, this flow imposes the necessity for the normal sale of labor power to take the form of the class struggle. But, with its openly antagonistic character, this very form denies the fluidity of the accumulation process. Thus, this normal flow needs to determine the class struggle by giving it the concrete form of its opposite, that is, the form of a general relation of solidarity. It is therefore a general relation between

antagonistic personifications which needs to be presented to the consciousness of those concerned as a political relation which has no other content than to be a natural relation between abstractly free persons. But it is precisely a relation established as the product of free consciousnesses which are the concrete form of alienated consciousness, that is, of a relation which personifications establish among themselves. Therefore, they cannot fail to confront it as they do with every product of theirs, namely, as a social power possessing an objective existence external to them, to which they are subject.

The double necessity of the total capital of society to have its own political representative in the class struggle and for the class struggle to take the appearance of its opposite, takes the concrete form of the relation of citizenship of the state. The state is that objectified social relation which appears to spring from the abstract free will of those to whom the naturalness of blood or soil has given the attribute of citizens, and which acts as the general political representative of social capital.

Built on its historically specific condition as an agent of social capital in charge of the general direct action necessary for the purchase and sale of labor power for its value, the capitalist state subsumes in itself all the determinations proper to the general direct agent of the normal reproduction of the exploitation of the working class. In other words, the state is the exploiter of the doubly free workers, not as their immediate individuality, but directly as a class.

It is needless to remember that capitalist exploitation does not end with the sale of labor power for its value but begins specifically with this sale. As the general direct agent of the reproduction of the extraction of surplus value, the state is charged with the exercise of all forms of general direct coercion on the working class that transcend the fluid movement of the labor process carried out within each individual capital. It thus confronts the working class with the power that comes from being the legal monopolist in the use of direct violence.

At first sight, then, it would seem that the direct personification of social capital naturally belongs to the members of the capitalist class which it sets out for this purpose. It would also seem that the positive personification of social capital does not in any way fall within the determinations of the working class. On the contrary, it would seem that the working class can only personify the needs of social capital by acting as the pure immediate negation of them. That is, by fighting against those who positively personify social capital as agents of the state, in order to force the state's application of policies that impose on individual private capitalists the purchase of labor power at its value. Although this mode of relationship has been a historically necessary stage in the formation of the modern capitalist state, and it constantly renews a specific space, it is not necessarily the most economical for social capital. It demands to

absorb the cost of a constant open confrontation with the working class. On the other hand, the very appearances of the commodity form that the general indirect social relation takes open the doors for a participation of the working class in the positive personification of the needs of social capital politically represented by the state. Let's see how.

In the capitalist mode of production, the worker is a forced laborer for social capital, from whom the latter extracts surplus-labour gratuitously in the form of surplus-value, from whom he buys his labour-power with the unpaid product of his own previous labour, and whose individual consumption has no other object than the reproduction of his labour-power as a use-value for capital. However, in the appearances of circulation, this content appears inverted to the worker's own consciousness as a necessary concrete form of the purchase and sale of his labor power at its value. In circulation, the forced character of the worker's labor is realized in the concrete form of the exercise by the worker of his right to freely dispose of his person. The free extraction of surplus labour is carried out in the concrete form of the exercise of the worker's right to equality through the exchange of equivalents. The purchase of the worker's labor power with the product of his own previously unpaid labor is carried out in the concrete form of the exercise of his right of ownership over what is his. And the reproduction of labor power as an attribute of capital through the individual consumption of the worker is realized in the concrete form of the exercise of the worker's right to satisfy his own individual interests. On the basis of the inverted appearances presented by these concrete forms, and through the direct conscious action of the working class which necessarily intervenes in the realization of the buying and selling of labor power for its value, the consciousness and will of the worker can play their role as specific parts of state power itself in the direct reproduction of social capital. They are no longer limited to acting as the external opponents of that power.

Thus arrives the moment when the accumulation of capital takes its concrete political form as universal democracy. Or, rather, as democracy as universal as the productive attributes with which social capital requires the working population as labor power sold at its value. For example, as the development of machinery causes the productive subjectivity of the worker to become independent of their physical strength, social capital tends to transform the entire female working population into a direct source of labor power to be exploited. By thus extending the reach of the universality of the industrial worker, the scope of the political expression of this universality also expands. Full citizenship of the female working population then becomes imperative. While this is most visibly expressed in the conquest of the right to vote, it is far from being exhausted by it. Like all such advances in the universality of the industrial worker, it cannot take the concrete form of a gracious concession from social capital to the working

class. It necessarily takes concrete form through the political struggle of the working class itself and, in particular, through the portion of it that is specifically the direct bearer of advancement in universality, that is, its female portion.

The appearances of the circulation of simple commodities gives rise to the classical contractualist conceptions of the capitalist state. For the same reason, these conceptions can only end up being exhausted, converted into the petty-bourgeois critique of the former. The appearances of the buying and selling of labor power for its value in circulation are the source of the modern contractualist pseudo-critique, so much in vogue today. Its validity is not surprising, considering how the development of the automation of control over the direct processes of production and circulation during the last quarter of a century has revolutionized the material conditions that determine the participation of the worker's subjectivity in them, thus revolutionizing the conditions that determine the universality of the worker in large-scale industry. In any case, it is not possible here to continue advancing on the concrete forms of the democratic state. However, it has been necessary for us to arrive at its simplest expression in order to show how, even for the mere production of absolute surplus value, the organization of social labor as a direct power of social capital is an attribute that concerns the political action of the working class. And, as the exercise of power in a democratic state, that organization is an attribute necessarily personified directly by members of the working class who apply their consciousness and will as such to that exercise. However, this class's will and consciousness are determined as necessary concrete forms of the reproduction of social capital. However ferocious the class struggle, and however democratic a state may be, the alienation of the powers of human labor as powers of capital has not receded in the least. On the contrary, it has shown that it reaches the consciousness and will of the workers not simply in so far as they are indirect personifications of the accumulation of capital in producing surplus value, but in so far as they are its direct positive personifications. As we have already said, the working class has nowhere to draw more power from to confront the bourgeoisie in the class struggle than that which gives it the personification of the powers of social capital insofar as the accumulation of this is confronted with the private character of individual capitals.²

2. Let us pause for a moment on the form of the course we are following, that is, on our method of knowledge. We have started from the simplest specific concrete of the capitalist mode of production, the commodity, and we have gone on to discover its determinations by ideally reproducing the development of its necessity. This is something we have done until recognizing them in their concrete form as direct political class relations that constitute the state as the general political representative of the total capital of society. The first part of this course involved a process of recognition from the point of view of the production of social consciousness. That is, we have advanced in our dialectical knowledge using as a tool the process of knowledge presented by Marx in *Capital*. But when confronted with the discovery of the state as this political

representative and continuing to advance further on its necessary concrete forms as such, our process of knowledge has continued developing along the same course it was following, although transformed into one of an originally social nature. With his own fully developed process of knowledge, Marx synthesized the specificity of the dialectical method in contrast to logical representation by pointing out:

"It is a "natural tendency" of a German economics professor to derive the economic category "value" from a concept, ... Here we have conceptual economics, whose supposed elucidation by the *vir obscurus* leads to "linking" and, in a way, to "unlinking".

'... All this is nothing more than "nonsense." At first glance, I do not start from "concepts," and therefore, not from the "concept of value" either, which is why I have no need to "divide" this concept in any way. What I start from is the simplest social form in which the product of labor takes shape in contemporary society, which is the "commodity."

... This explains why our *vir obscurus*, who has not even realized that my analytical method [...] bears not the slightest resemblance to that method of intertwining concepts that German professors like to use ('it is easy to fight with words, one can build a system with words')

"... Who is the one establishing a logical opposition here? Mr. Rodbertus, for whom 'use value' and 'exchange value' are, by nature, mere 'concepts' [...] Here, there exists a 'logical' opposition only for Rodbertus and the German school doctoral masters aligned with him, who start from the 'concept' of value, and not from the 'social thing,' the 'commodity,' and then the concept splits (unfolds) by itself as if it had two faces, ultimately ending up debating which of the two chimeras is the one they were looking for!

... But Rodbertus's superficiality is best revealed in his contrast of a 'logical' and a 'historical' concept" (Karl Marx. "Marginal Notes to Adolph Wagner's "Treatise on Political Economy". In: Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente, nº 97: Buenos Aires (1982), pp. 35-37).

The *theory of the derivation of the state* offers us a particularly illustrative example of how Marxism inverts the dialectical method into a "*conceptual economy*," so as to empty the revolutionary action of the working class of its historically specific determination by the transformation of the materiality of the labor process governed by the production of relative surplus value. The *theory of derivation* begins by proclaiming that it does not start from a concrete but from a concept:

"Our research does not immediately address the 'state' as a concrete historical structure; we first try to show the determinations of the state that can be systematically derived from the general concept of capital" (Bernhard Blanke, Ulrich Jürgens and Hans Kastendiek. "Form and Function of the Bourgeoisie State". In: State and Capital. Ed. by John Holloway and Sol Picciotto. Austin: University of Texas Press (1977), p. 119).

Without pause, this inversion is attributed to Marx himself, including the splitting of the concept into a historical and a logical one:

"Marx sees this concept as comprising the general laws of motion and interrelations of a form of society which is both historical, and then transitory, as well as being characterized by the well-defined necessary relations which make it a capitalist society" (ibid., p. 119).

The question now turns to the logical construction of the concept of the state. For which a characteristic must be imputed to it that distinguishes it *functionally* from the other forms. This is where they resort to inserting in the text itself a quotation from Marx taken uncritically to put it as if it were an account of the question itself. In this case, it is an observation made by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* when they were just confronted with the concrete manifestations of capitalist society, without the former having discovered capital as the materialized general social relation converted into the immediate alienated subject of social production. Thus the unity of the movement of social capital realized through the direct organization of social production by the state as a necessary concrete form of realizing the indirect organization of it through the valorization of value still appeared to them as an external relation: on the one hand, the indirect organization thus converted into an abstract expression, civil society, and on the other hand the direct organization converted into another abstraction, the state placed next to the first. The logic of the construction of the concept of the state is thus defined in order to guarantee the corresponding externality:

"This means that the state must be developed not only as standing 'beside and outside society' but also as a necessary form in the reproduction of society itself" (ibid., p. 119)

The contrast between a logical concept and a historical one is already fully present. Every historical necessity has been reduced to a mere question of interpretation of the scope of the logical concept:

"We call this procedure *form analysis* for brevity. [...] At this level of abstraction [...] can only give the *general starting points* for the development of the "functions" of the process of reproduction, which must take shape in such a way that they are sustained outside the privately organized labor system. [...] Certainly, the exact delimitation and mediation of the analysis of form and of historical analysis creates difficult problems. It depends on how one determines the historical character of Marx's concept of capital in general" (ibid., p. 119)

In the real world, the working class has a specific historical potential to develop the productive forces of society to the point of taking them beyond where they can organize themselves in a capitalist way. The working class acquires this potentiality from the transformation in the materiality of the labor process imposed by capital in pursuit of the production of relative surplus value.

3.3 The development of the capitalist state as a necessary concrete form of the production of relative surplus value

The state begins to present itself in the historical process as a condition for the development of capital accumulation. However, its historical specificity as the political representative of social capital arises from the concrete form of class struggle that the production of absolute surplus value necessarily takes. But, as with any concrete form of capital accumulation, it can only account for its historical potentiality in relation to the production of relative surplus value. In particular, with the production of relative surplus value through the machinery system of large-scale industry.

In the first place, the more capital accumulation grows on the basis of the production of relative surplus value, the more the absolute and relative magnitude of the portion of collective labor that is consciously organized within each individual capital grows. But however great each of these portions of collective labor becomes, it remains a private portion in relation to the total labor of society. Thus, the expansion of the scale required to produce relative surplus value collides even more with the very private fragmentation of social capital. The quickest way to overcome this obstacle is the centralization of the mutually private capitals existing in a given branch under one hand. And the

And it has the action of the working class in the class struggle as a concrete form of realization insofar as it needs to do so through the centralization and control of individual capital as an immediate attribute of social capital. But the "*conceptual economy*" of the theory of derivation cannot go beyond the formal subsumption of the worker in capital. So, the working class appears to him stripped of all specific historical potentiality. Its confrontation with the capitalist class thus appears to be nothing more than a formal difference with respect to the struggle for subsistence that pits every forced worker against the non-worker who exploits him. And then this confrontation itself appears reduced to an even more abstract "natural law":

"All these factors create conflict which are not the result of the *objective movement* of capital even though they are conditioned by it, but of the demand by the working class for its right to live. These conflicts, i.e., these class conflicts, are expressed in historically variable ways, but they are nevertheless the fundamental conflicts in which the relation of 'politics' to 'economics' is determined" (Blanke, Jürgens, and Kastendiek, "Form and Function of the Bourgeoisie State," p. 127)

Then, it only remains to celebrate the exteriority proper to the conceptual entanglement thus achieved:

"This relation has now become an external relation, and our analysis must therefore seek the way in which forms affect each other and trace the general characteristics of their effect on class relations within production" (ibid., p. 127)

most powerful hand in this sense is that of social capital itself, acting through its general political representative, the state. The production of relative surplus value thus tends to take concrete form in the action of the state which advances over the mere private property of capital, transforming it into a directly social property. Social property that, as the capital that it continues to be, continues to confront its own owners, the working class and the remaining capitalist class as citizens, as a power that is alien to them. Obviously, in determining the concrete speed and scope with which this process of abolition of private property over capital is developing, which, at the same time, reproduces it as a directly social property that confronts its owners as an alien power, the national fragmentation of the total capital of society is substantially mediated. Therefore, the fragmentation of the general political representative of social capital into nation states is also mediated.

Second, the more the intensive accumulation of capital grows on the basis of the production of relative surplus value, the more capital needs to transform every subjective intervention in the production process into a scientifically objectified attribute in machinery. Capital needs more to produce a universal worker capable of developing and controlling any system of machinery that falls to its lot. The more the consolidated surplus working population grows above the level at which capital needs it as a countervailing factor to the solidarity of the working class as a concrete way of realizing the value of labor power. And, with this growth, the violence that capital resorts to in order to eliminate that excess in between also grows.

On the other hand, the more the production process is based on the control of natural forces in order to make them act by transforming the object, the greater its action on the very reproduction of these natural forces. The greater the consumption it makes of them and, therefore, the greater the waste it returns to its sources. *Mutatis mutandis*, the development of large-scale industry involves the same relationship between individual capital and social capital with regard to the reproduction of natural forces as it does with regard to the reproduction of labor power. Individual capital can only see in them a source of immediate valorization, and it is impossible for it to stop before destroying them in pursuit of this objective. But the predation carried out by individual capitals inevitably leads to the point where the reproduction of the accumulation process itself is endangered. The depletion of natural force sources, the cost involved in recovering them from the midst of the mountain of waste dumped on them, and the increased cost of labor due to the need to protect and recover it from environmental contamination, become additional obstacles to the accumulation of the total of individual capitals.

It is then that the social capital needs to take action directly on the matter. It does so by directly governing, through its general political representative, the conditions under which individual capitals gratuitously appropriate the forces of nature. And the only way in which the direct regulation of social labour can take concrete form in the capitalist mode of production as an action of the state is the class struggle. The capitalist class needs to personify the powers of capital in order to destroy natural forces by multiplying the immediate production of surplus value. It is up to the working class to personify the opposing powers, as a necessary concrete form of the reproduction of its own labour power for social capital.

At the same time, the more the individual and total scale of accumulation grows with the production of relative surplus value, the more complex the autonomous process of allocating social labour under the various useful concrete forms of social labour becomes. But over and above the growth of this complexity, the more the accumulation of capital develops on the basis of the production of relative surplus value, the more the indirect autonomous organization of social production revolves around a rate of profit which tends to reduce its magnitude in relation to the total mass of living and dead labour which it must allocate under the various corresponding useful concrete forms. That is, the rate of profit of the social capital becomes more insensible with respect to the movements within it by the individual capitals that participate in the formation of the former. And, conversely, the magnitude of these movements is multiplied more as a reflection of changes within the general rate of profit. On the other hand, the expansion of accumulation through the advance of constant capital at the expense of variable capital clashes with the fact that the powers of social labour are carried in the very product of social labour. The constant revolution in the productive capacity of labour on which the production of relative surplus value is based presupposes the constant expansion of social commodity production. It presupposes, therefore, the expansion of social consumption as if it did not contain any specific limitation given by the capitalist form itself that governs that consumption. However, with the expansion of constant capital at the expense of that of variable capital, the consumption of means of subsistence for the workers can only expand at a particularly restricted rate with respect to the expansion of the production of means of production in pursuit of the production of relative surplus value. The private character with which social labour is carried out is manifested, then, in the need of social capital to expand material production in general, taking it beyond the consumption that it itself determines as a condition for this expansion. Thus, the normal course of the accumulation of capital on the basis of the production of relative surplus value is a periodic succession of more or less acute crises of general overproduction.

In this way, the development of capital accumulation increasingly drives the autonomous organization of social production to take concrete form

through direct organization by the state. As a task founded on a scientific and collective basis, this organization goes beyond the subjective powers of the capitalist class to act as the personification of the consciousness and will of social capital. Thus, the political representation of social capital increasingly becomes the task of a special unproductive collective worker, of a specialized collective organ within the social division of labor, consisting of doubly free individual workers.

3.4 The reversion of the "interventionist" state to the "neoliberal" state in the last quarter of a century

The development of capital accumulation necessarily takes concrete form through advancements in the direct organization of social production by the state. How, then, can the obvious transition from an "interventionist" state to a "neoliberal" state, which has dominated the scene for the last quarter of a century, be explained? Several options are offered to us. On the one hand, there is the open apologia for the course followed by capital accumulation, in which everything is made to appear as the triumph of the free human spirit, founded on its abstractly mercantile nature, over the dark bonds imposed by the authoritarian perversity of the "statist spirit." Against this conception, two others arise that present themselves as its absolute opposite. The first holds that we are facing a circumstantial defeat inflicted by the capitalist class upon the working class, either simply due to the greater strength of the former, or as a consequence of the betrayal suffered by the latter at the hands of its leaders. The second conception speaks of the exhaustion, failure, or crisis of a "model of accumulation" based on state intervention as an agent of "redistribution" of social wealth, in a process in which the growth of mass working-class consumption appears as a condition for the realization of surplus value. In response to the chaos caused by the rise in wages, capital would have imposed a new model of accumulation, the neoliberal, in order to discipline the working class. As opposed as the unreserved apologia and these apparent critiques of the course followed by capital accumulation may seem, they all have a common starting point: they begin with the analysis of the ideological and political forms presented by the change in this course to later analytically associate them with changes in the technical conditions of the material production process. On the contrary, what is at stake is starting from this change to develop, on its basis, the need for changes in ideological and political forms.

3.5 The national form of capital accumulation in relation to its centralization

Given its need to expand material production as if this expansion did not carry with it the necessity of any limits originating from the social form that governs its organization, the accumulation of capital is a global process by its very nature. However, given the private character in which social labor is carried out within it, this global essence is born limited by, and develops by limiting, national processes of capital accumulation. That is, until the present, the accumulation of capital is a national process in form. The fragmentation of the total capital of society into the social capital of each national sphere necessarily manifests in the national determination of its general political representative. This concerns the concrete determination of the state as a national state.

Those who invert the determination and conceive of accumulation as a national process by its essence and not by its mere form, believe that every national sphere has the potential to be one in which accumulation is carried out on the basis of the production of commodities in general by capitals whose magnitude corresponds to the development of the productive capacity of labor. This is nothing but an apologetic of capital, since it is completely devoid of the potentiality thus imputed to each national portion of it. On the contrary, the full development of the world essence of capital accumulation through its national form is realized in the formation of a limited number of national processes in which capital presents itself in a general way by bringing together these attributes. At the same time, this full development is expressed in the determination of other countries as spheres of accumulation limited by the production of specific commodities, on the basis of the relatively favorable presence in them of natural conditioning to the productivity of labor that cannot be controlled by capital in a general way. In these national spheres, capital accumulation develops its specificity around the appropriation of the differential rent of land and, also, of the rent from the monopoly over these natural conditions insofar as they impose a limit on the absolute scale of production compared to the size of normal social consumption. Argentina is one of the fullest expressions of this specificity. Thirdly, the accumulation of capital determines other national spheres as the location of productive processes whose materiality makes them specifically suitable for the exploitation of a labor force historically disciplined for collective work and determined as a latent or stagnant working population in its condition of surplus. Finally, it leaves other countries no more potential than to be reservoirs of consolidated surplus working population. That is, of human beings whom capital has condemned to death by stripping them of their most elementary generic determination as such: the capacity to produce their own life through labor.

By the mid-20th century, competition in the world market between national accumulation processes, where this follows its general course—that is, among the countries of the first type mentioned—imposes the need for a specific form of capital centralization. This necessity presents as a single exception the largest national portion of social capital, the United States. It is a question of the need to centralize capital as state property within each national sphere. In the largest national economies of Western Europe, centralization of capital as state property then only needs to cover some essential branches of social production to express its potential. Accordingly, its general political execution corresponds to political parties representing the working class, focusing on its struggle against the capitalist class as an expression of the progress in the conditions in which the universal worker is produced within the national sphere.³ Thus, the partial centralization of capital as directly collective property within that domain smoothly assumes concrete political form through representative bourgeois democracy. These are the determinations that give rise to social-democratic parties (including the Eurocommunists) as the general political representatives of the working class in the countries in question. The faster the production of the universal worker and the centralization of capital as state property needs to advance, the more it falls to the party exercising the general political representation of the national working class to also become the general political representative of the corresponding social capital. Of course, this social capital includes both directly social and merely private property within the national sphere. That is, the further the national process of capital accumulation advances in the two senses indicated, the more it determines the parties of the national working class as its general political representatives.

3. This partial centralization of capital as the property of the state is a condition for the reproduction of the national process of accumulation. It is, therefore, a condition for the immediate reproduction of the respective national working classes as active working classes. In its historical development, the struggle for this immediate reproduction necessarily passes through a phase in which its determination as a political struggle governs its determination as a trade union struggle: the buying and selling of labour power for its value can only be imposed in the concrete form of the political conquest of "workers' rights". In this phase, the trade union struggle is subordinated to its political struggle: the workers' unions are party unions. The centralization of capital through state ownership as a condition for the immediate reproduction of the national working class renews the basis of this subordination. By contrast, in the United States, where the size of the sphere of accumulation still frees capital from the need to centralize itself as state property, there comes a point when the struggle of the working class to reproduce itself immediately as an active working class is exhausted in trade union action. The American working class thus loses, for the moment, its potential to sustain and develop its own political representation. This is subsumed in the political parties that represent the needs of the national social capital as simple parties of the capitalist class.

Thus, it determines the working class itself, on whose surplus labour it feeds as the alienated political personification of the exploitation of itself. Although, up to this point, the political parties of the working class continue to share the general representation of the national process of capital accumulation with those who represent the capitalist class.

But the political forms in which the centralization of capital as directly social property is carried out within the national sphere change radically as this centralization can only begin to express its potentiality, provided that it encompasses the totality of the capitals that are valorized in the country. This circumstance occurs particularly in national spheres where a relatively restricted mass of capital far from the technical vanguard can only acquire the power to develop the accumulative force given to it by having within its national scope an enormous mass of the working population and latent natural wealth, by centralizing itself in an absolute way as state capital. Here, the absolute centralization of capital has a concrete political form that needs to be realized: the national abolition of the bourgeoisie at a single blow, at the hands of the working class. It has, therefore, the concrete political form of a social revolution in which the national working class fully appropriates the capital it valorizes. The political party of this working class becomes the exclusive general representative of the national process of capital accumulation. This is the case of the USSR, almost half a century before the emergence of the even partial need of the capitals of European countries to be centralized as state property. This is also the case of China, but already in association with the transformations experienced by the global accumulation of capital in the second half of the twentieth century. Despite the necessary similarity of their political form, their very separation in time indicates that both cases contain markedly different potentialities with respect to the change in the materiality of the production process of large-scale industry in that period.

However, less than half a century after the beginning of the process of partial centralization of capital in the hands of nation states as a condition for reaching the scale required by competition in the world market, the inexorable march of accumulation exceeds the scope of this form of concentration. It does so by making the national scale of any capital insufficient to maintain that competitiveness. In order to promote the accumulation of the capital in question, national state property becomes an obstacle to it. Certainly, the need to concentrate in order to reproduce directly reaches the national portions of the social capital themselves. But the urgency to achieve the level of concentration necessary to keep any individual capital, including state-owned ones, in operation progresses much faster than the substantially more complex process of unifying several national spheres of accumulation into one.

Thus, the capitals of each nation-state face the problem of concentrating beyond their national borders long before they can centralize as the direct property of the political representative of a social capital that encompasses them all. That is, as the direct property of a new nation-state integrated by the previously mutually independent nation-states. The continuity of the centralization and concentration of the capitals that have been centralized up to this point as property of the nation-states then takes concrete form in their loss of the condition of being the direct property of the social capital of their original national sphere. They become the property of capitals which, by their condition as private in relation to any specific portion of the social capital, can centralize by crossing national borders. Of course, this condition of being private in relation to the social capital of a national sphere may also be an attribute of a capital originating from another national sphere which, within that sphere, directly belongs to the corresponding social capital. It is no accident that these capitals have reached their condition as the property of a nation-state precisely in order to achieve a scale above that of any other that could compete with them. Thus, in the case of those belonging to the largest national spheres, they are generally heavily concentrated capitals. This puts them in a position to confront the majority of simply private capitals with which they compete for acquiring the former state capitals of other countries. The privatization of state capital within a national sphere therefore necessarily includes, among its concrete forms, the transformation of such capital into a capital owned by another nation-state.

3.6 The production of the worker of large-scale industry

Let us review synthetically the development presented in the second chapter. From the beginning of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, the transformations experienced by the productive attributes of the labor force with the development of the machinery system tend to extend to the universality of the workers exploited by capital within the national spheres where accumulation takes its most general form. Faced with the need to satisfy this degree of universality fluidly, and the degree of complexity that corresponds to it, each national social capital takes directly into its hands a large part of the general production of the labor force in a massive and relatively undifferentiated way. Instead of paying each individual worker the full value of his specific labour-power, individual capitals contributes via the tax system to the formation of a common fund administered by the political representative of the national social capital, the national state. And, in turn, the state transforms these funds into the relatively universal production of the national labor force.

Beyond providing them with the labor power they require in a generally cheapened way due to their mass production; this mode of production allows individual capitals to normally value even the portions of themselves that they put in the hands of the state through taxes. The individual wage at which labor power is sold ceases to include what its production costs as soon as it is in charge of the state. But, through taxes, the state does not charge individual capital the full price of the use values (educational, health, etc.) that it provides to the workers so that they can reproduce their labor power. It only charges them the cost price of them. That is, the workers receive the full mass of use-values necessary to reproduce their labour-power, but individual capitals buy labour-power by paying for it at the cost-price of these use-values. They therefore buy it below its value, although the workers receive the full mass of use-values which they need to consume in order to reproduce it. The difference is equivalent to the surplus value that would have accrued to the capitalists who, if they had privately produced the means of subsistence for the workers produced by the state, would have sold them at their price of production. But the capitalists who buy the labour-power thus cheapened, sell their own commodities at the full price of production of these. Thus, far from vanishing, the surplus value in question is actually realized by the group of individual capitalists who contribute part of their capital to the state in the form of taxes. And not to mention those who manage to evade this payment. The surplus-value in question therefore enters into the formation of the general rate of profit. This is one of the legs on which capital's aversion to fiscal surplus is based.⁴

The advance in the relatively universal and undifferentiated reproduction of the national labor force by social capital begins in its realization in a specific concrete form: the victorious union and political struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie for the conditions of exploitation of the labor force. And everything that forms the value of labor power is paid for by the working class with its own labor. But, since it is the political representative of the national social capital who is directly in charge of this reproduction, it is finally materialized in the form of the access of the citizens of the national state to education, health, retirement, unemployment coverage, housing, recreation, etc., provided free of charge by the latter. Based on this appearance, the ideological spokesmen of capital invert the determinations of the value of labor

4. Another is the feeding of accumulation through the public deficit. The public deficit financed with debt sustains accumulation based on the expansion of fictitious capital. At the same time, its financing by the issuance of paper money in excess of the needs of circulation (so that the currency loses a part of its unit capacity to represent value) allows industrial capital to advance on the same fictitious capital insofar as such financing negatively determines the real rate of interest.

power and its forms of realization in the class struggle, presenting them as the "concessions" graciously granted by the welfare state" to the working class.

Within its relative unity, the advance towards the universality of the worker of large-scale industry seen so far contains two productive subjectivities that move in opposite directions. On the one hand, capital does not cease to develop the productive subjectivity of a part of the individual workers who make up the collective worker of large-scale industry. It advances it in its ability to progressively bring natural forces under control. And it imposes the same advance with respect to the subjectivity that is in charge of controlling the process of circulation of capital. On the other hand, capital is constantly expanding the scale with which it needs to reproduce a labor force whose productive subjectivity lies in the contribution of its manual expertise to perform increasingly simplified labor. And this expansion takes place in a remarkable way in the direct process of production of the industrial branch on which the production of relative surplus value is based. That is, within the sphere of social production that the machinery itself produces. That is, in spite of the progress made in the control of natural forces, capital only expands its dependence, within the mechanical industry itself, on the manual skill of the worker both in the adjustment of machinery and in the assembly process. Rather than simply sharing the development of the same productive subjectivity, the reproduction of the labor power of this second type of worker is assimilated to that of the first by the force given to it by the direct massive intervention of its productive subjectivity in the very heart of the production of machinery.

The development of the productive capacity of labor through the automation of the adjustment of machinery and the robotization of the assembly line radically changed the situation towards the last quarter of the twentieth century. The productive subjectivity of the collective worker thus takes a revolutionary leap forward in the process of determining itself as the pure capacity to consciously control natural forces, transforming them into a means for human life. Thus, the exercise by the collective worker of his productive subjectivity has made the capitalist mode of production take a revolutionary leap forward in the realization of its historical reason for existing. But as is necessarily the case with every advance in the development of the generic human being realized under the alienated form of the development of capital accumulation, it is far from asserting itself simply as a step forward in the individual development of the workers who have produced it. On the contrary, it becomes a new source of torment and exploitation that capital pours on them.

Capital has thus succeeded in displacing the productive subjectivity of the worker who develops and applies his manual expertise from the heart of the development of the production of relative surplus value. But this does not mean

for capital the need to transform the collective worker en masse into a subject whose function lies in the production of pure progress in the conscious control of natural forces. On the contrary, with the introduction of computerized and robotized machinery, capital renews and expands the bases on which it can extract surplus value from workers whose productive attributes are reduced to the intensified and extended delivery of their already absolutely degraded manual expertise in the direct process of production. For capital, the fact that it has ceased to depend on the manual skill of the worker in the direct process of production of machinery simply frees him from reproducing the labor power of this type of worker in conditions similar to those necessary to reproduce that of the worker whose productive subjectivity lies in the development and application of conscious control over natural forces. He needs only to expend on the reproduction of the first labour-power what is strictly necessary to put it into action in a labour-process which is extremely reduced to the mechanical repetition of a manual task, the working day of which can be extended correspondingly. Conversely, the development of the subjectivity of the worker in charge of advancing in the control of natural forces requires an increase in his individual consumption of use-values, the prolongation of the time in which he must be trained before entering production, etc., and the shortening of the working day.

Every step taken in the transformation of the productive subjectivity of the worker towards the control of natural forces is a step forward in the development of the universal character of the worker of large-scale industry. But now this step forward presents itself in the concrete form of its opposite. Namely, the accentuation of the fragmentation within the collective worker of large-scale industry between the two types of labor force that make it up. In its advance towards this point, it was cheaper for social capital to produce the two types of labor power jointly and relatively undifferentiated. Now, the gap between them has become significant enough that it is convenient to orient the expenditure on producing them from the outset according to the specific attributes required of each of them. The retreat of the solidarity of the working class and of the direct action of the state, as a specific necessary form of the production of labor power, is then imposed. The value of each type of labor power is immediately realized through the individual wage paid by them, which includes the deterioration of the conditions of reproduction of one of them. The advance in the differentiation in question thus has a first general necessary form: the retreat of the trade union strength of the working class.

At the same time, the more the centralization of capital as the property of the national state has developed, and the more the production of labor power is in the hands of the latter, the more the differentiation within the working class between the bearers of the opposing productive subjectivities is striking. It happens that the more these two processes have developed, the more the

production of labor power has taken on the concrete form of affirmation by its bearers, the workers, not merely as such, but in their condition as undifferentiated citizens of the same national state. So now it is not simply a question of differentiation as to the conditions of sale of each labor power. It is a question of differentiation from the general political relation which directly links all workers, and capitalists, as personified attributes of the same national portion of the social capital. It is therefore a question of formal equality of rights among the sellers of labor power giving way to a growing real inequality among them.

The very development of capital accumulation that has led to the need to radically differentiate the labor force that makes up the collective worker of large industry has also created the conditions to carry out this differentiation. It has done so by turning entire countries into reservoirs of surplus population, either latent or stuck in that condition. In particular, it has created massive reservoirs of peasant populations disciplined for the systematic work required by modern manufacturing and to act as an appendage to the machinery due to their history: these are free peasants practicing irrigated agriculture under a strongly structured tributary and rent-based exploitation regime, who can no longer sustain themselves through it, no matter how minimal their consumption may be. This is the case in East Asia, and particularly in China, due to the centralization of capital as the property of the national state.

Now, the genesis of a working class stripped of all productive subjectivity other than that necessary to serve within manufacturing and as an appendage of machinery, and therefore excluded from all consumption that exceeds that necessary to reproduce that subjectivity, ceases to be a problem to be solved simply in countries where accumulation takes its general form. Because of the national fragmentation in which the world essence of capital accumulation is realized, it is one thing to reverse the progress made in the mass production of the national working class under relatively uniform conditions, in order to give rise to the violent degradation of the living conditions of a significant part of it. And it is quite another for massive degradation to take place beyond the national border. Or, even within this border, but reaching citizens of another country who have migrated to take the place of the progressively unskilled workforce.

International competition to sell labor power is thus developed, both indirectly through world trade in goods, and directly through immigration. So that the portion of the native working class in the country where capital develops its general accumulation, and which capital needs to be located there to exploit its degraded productive subjectivity, is forced to retreat in the conditions under which it sells its labor power. If it does not, it is thrown from the condition of floating overpopulation to that of consolidated overpopulation. The time has come for the "welfare state" to

give way to the neoliberal privatization of the conditions in which labor power is produced. And this transition necessarily takes concrete form in the political defeat of the working class at the hands of the bourgeoisie.

To the general need of capital to expand its accumulation scale beyond national borders, there is this particular incentive for the fragmented internationalization of social production. It is not about advancing toward the directly global character of social production through the overcoming of national fragmentation. On the contrary, the so-called 'globalization' is fundamentally based on the deepening of differentiated national fragmentation. Thus, the unity of the need to extend the centralization of capital beyond its directly social property within a national framework, with that of transforming the undifferentiated production of labor power by social capital itself into its production through differentiation of individual wages, and with that of carrying out this differentiation through discrimination based on 'national' attributes, results in a synthetic and even more comprehensive expression than the dismantling of the 'welfare state': it is about the replacement of the 'interventionist' state with the 'neoliberal' state.

The complete expression of this transformation occurs in the USSR, where the centralization of capital as directly social property within its national sphere had reached the whole of it in the process of developing the previous universality of the worker of large-scale industry. We will dwell on its specificity in the next chapter.

3.7 What political action of the working class today

Let us consider first of all the national economies where capital accumulates enclosing the axis of its historical role in the development of the material productive forces of society. In the United States, the degree of concentration required still does not clash with the scale of the national level to the point of demanding the absolute centralization of social capital within the national level. So, the national state is still not the immediate subject of centralization. At the same time, the national accumulation of capital advances on the basis of sharpening the differentiation in the conditions under which the labor force of different productive subjectivity is produced within the country. Moreover, as soon as the scale required or the degree of differentiation exceeds the scope of its national scope, U.S. social capital evades the problem by associating with those of other countries that formally retain their political autonomy in a differentiated international fragmentation (NAFTA, FTAA).

The fact that we are in the process of constituting a new specific area of capital accumulation imposes on the social capitals of the countries of the European Union the active political presence of their respective nation states. But at the same time, the greater specific scope of accumulation now available to individual capitals dilutes the need for its centralization as the direct property of the national state. Thus, among the modalities of development of the centralization of capital that had already become directly socially owned within one country, the intervention of the state capital of one member state as a private buyer of the former state capital in others stands out. For its part, the very integration of the new specific sphere of accumulation dilutes in it the contradictions inherent in the differentiation in the conditions of reproduction of the working class of each of its member countries.

In addition to their reproduction and regeneration as simply private capitals within their respective national spheres (constituted and in constitution by the integration of former nations), the degree of centralization achieved by North American and European capitals in relation to the international division of labor – both classical and based on the differentiation of the productive subjectivity of labor power – makes international management deprived of them openly take concrete form in the direct political and military international management of their respective nation states.

Emptied of the immediate need to politically personify the centralization of capital within its national sphere, the action of the European working class begins to retreat towards the forms previously specific only to the American one. Thus, the political action of the portion of the world working class that holds in its hands the axis of the development of the productive forces tends to be reduced to trade union action by the sale of labor power at its value. And, in turn, this same union action is receding in the face of the advance of the differentiation of productive subjectivity within the same country. For its part, the direct management by the national state of the international business of private capital that is based in the country is expressed in the identification of the national working class with the political parties that internally represent these private capitals. So the working classes in question tend to be represented politically, either by their own action or by their omission of action, by the national bourgeois political parties and the domination they exercise over the international policy practiced by the national state. For their part, the working classes of the countries where capital lies, especially in the simplest productive subjectivity, can hardly struggle to reproduce themselves in these conditions in the face of the alternative of falling into the pauperism of consolidated workers' overpopulation. Their own immediate reproduction as active working classes is conditioned by the reproduction of their national processes of capital accumulation based on the relative cheapness of their labor power.

As a result, they can hardly take into their hands the general political representation of the capital that exploits them in their national sphere. Even further from this possibility are the working classes of the countries that are becoming consolidated reservoirs of surplus working population for capital. Here, the national state politically represents social capital insofar as it administers general pauperism in the midst of "every man for himself."

While the centralization of social capital transcends for the moment its general necessity of being carried out as a political action that directly concerns the national state, its political representation takes on a specific characteristic form: the proliferation of the so-called "non-governmental organizations." Under this concrete form, the exercise of the political representation of social capital appears inverted as the abstract negation of such representation. But it no longer does so, as it did when the political representation of social capital in its process of centralization appeared as the overcoming of capitalism itself through the abstractly free action of the working class. Now, it appears as the very negation of the working class as the subject of political action.

These conditions in which the essence of present-day capital accumulation develops take on a specific ideological form in the pseudo-critique of the capitalist mode of production which is fascinated by the appearance of the opposition of a "civil society"⁵ to the state. Thus, the antagonistic historical roles of the working class and the capitalist class, determined by the transformation into the very materiality of human labour governed by the real subsumption of labour in capital, are erased from the political struggle. Its place is taken by the appearance that, on the one hand, the autonomous assertion of the human spirit, free from its historical determination as the personification of social capital⁶, is unfolding, and, on the other hand, the state is acting not as the necessary political representative of social capital but as an autonomous

5. Called as such either explicitly or implied through the abstract splitting of citizenship determinations with respect to the state.

6. Take, for example, Holloway:

"The definition of a critical-revolutionary subject is an impossibility, since 'critical-revolutionary' means that the subject is not subordinate, it is in rebellion against subordination. [...] Insubordination is inevitably a movement against definition, an overflow. A denial, a rejection, a scream. [...] This is where the question of the critical-revolutionary subject must begin. The scream is not a scream in the abstract. It is a cry against it: a cry against oppression, against exploitation, against dehumanization. It is a cry-against-that exists in all of us to the extent that we are all oppressed by capitalism, [...] Insubordination is a central part of everyday experience, from the disobedience of children, to the curse of the alarm clock that tells us to get up and go to work, to all forms of absenteeism, sabotage and simulation at work, to open rebellion, as in the open and organized cry of "Enough is

subject that serves capital from outside itself.⁷

enough!" [...] Non-subordination is the simple and unspectacular struggle to shape one's own life. It is people's opposition to giving up the simple pleasures of life, their resistance to becoming machines, the determination to forge and maintain some degree of being able to do. [...] What is at the core of the rebel theory? What is the substance of hope? "The working class," some say, [...] "Call it the working class," we reply, "but we cannot see it, study it, or organize it, because the working class as a revolutionary class is not: it is non-identity. It seems like an empty answer. [...] There is no positive force to cling to, no security, no guarantee. All positive forces are chimeras that disintegrate when we touch them" (John Holloway. *To change the world without taking power. The meaning of the revolution today*. Buenos Aires: Revista Herramienta y Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2002, pp. 218-221).

One might think that, in any case, Holloway is absolutely right on one point: "it seems like an empty answer." Yet even in this he is doubly mistaken. In the first place, it seems to be nothing more than an empty answer, insofar as the question is the production of the conscious action of the working class which realizes the historical necessity of capital to surpass itself in its own development. Second, Holloway's response overflows with the ideological inversion to which we are referring. On the other hand, Hardt and Negri do not stop at the saga:

"An effective notion of postmodern republicanism must be built *in the middle*, on the basis of the lived experience of the multitudes of the world. One element that we can point out at the basic and elementary level is *the willingness to be against it*. In general, the willingness to be against it does not seem to require much explanation. Disobedience to authority is one of the most natural and healthy acts. It seems completely obvious to us that those who are being exploited resist and – if the necessary conditions are right – rebel.

»... Precisely, when the disciplinary regime reaches its highest level and its most complete application, it reveals itself as the extreme limit of a social agreement, a society in the process of overcoming itself. Certainly, this is largely due to the engine behind the process, the subjective dynamics of resistance and uprising,... » (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2002, pp. 199 and 227-228).

7. The ideological necessity of realizing this separation leads Holloway to affirm that the state is a capitalist social relation and, at the same time, to link it externally with capitalist social relations, as a subject "conditioned and limited" by them, which it "fosters" in order to ensure its own existence:

"The fact that labor is organized on a capitalist basis means that what the state does and can do is limited and conditioned by the need to maintain the system of capitalist organization of which it is a part.

"...As a form of capitalist social relations, its existence depends on the reproduction of these social relations: therefore, it is not only a State in a capitalist

This inversion has a complete political expression: proclaiming as the quintessence of revolutionary action that overcomes the capitalist mode of production the abomination and horror of the political action of the working class aimed at taking state power. In this way, the forms of political action that reflect the circumstantial impotence of the working class to exercise the general political representation of social capital, which it valorizes with its surplus labor, and therefore its circumstantial impotence to advance by directly taking its own alienated general social relations into its own hands, are ideologically inverted as if they were a leap forward in the process of overcoming alienation.⁸

society but a capitalist State, since its very continued existence is subject to the promotion of the reproduction of capitalist social relations as a whole" (Holloway, *Changing the World Without Taking Power. The Meaning of Revolution Today*, pp. 0 and 143-144).

Hardt and Negri are not far behind:

"There are many ways to be outside the state and to oppose it, and the neoliberal project is only one of those ways" (Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 288).

8. To cultivate the appearance that all social protest is potentially capable of overcoming capitalism simply by turning its back on it, Holloway has to begin by emptying this overcoming of all specificity. It cannot even allow the specificity implied by the transformation of the materiality of labour into a process where individual labour-power is applied as an immediately social power to the conscious control of natural forces in order to make them operate automatically on objects in order to transform them, and thus where the consciousness of one's own determination as the bearer of the powers of social labour has been transformed in the general social relationship. That is why he can only refer to the abolition of capitalism in terms of a vulgarity worthy of a self-help manual:

"The scream implies a tension between what exists and what could possibly exist, between the indicative (what is) and the subjunctive (what can be). We live in an unjust society, but we wish it were not: both parts of prayer are inseparable and exist in constant tension with each other.

». . . The challenge is, rather, to unite pessimism and optimism, horror and hope in a theoretical understanding of the two-dimensionality of the world.

». . . Communism is the movement of intensity against the dullness of feelings that makes the horrors of capitalism possible.

». . . Certainly, the Ethiopian peasant's fart does not make the passing gentleman fall off his horse, but it is nevertheless part of the substratum of negativity that, although generally invisible, can explode in moments of acute social tension. This substratum of negativity is the stuff of social volcanoes. This layer of inarticulate non-subordination, without a face, without a voice [...] is the materiality of anti-power, the basis of hope" (Holloway, *Changing the World Without Taking the Lead*)

power. The Meaning of Revolution Today, pp. 21, 23, 157 and 231).

Quite appropriately, this political impotence completes its ideological role by lowering the specific power of scientific consciousness as a necessary concrete form of the political action of the proletariat to the level of "desire" and "celebration," so much in the postmodern style.⁹

On this path he reaches the culminating point in his glorification of political impotence:

"So how do we change the world without taking power? At the end of the book, as at the beginning, we don't know. [...] Revolutionary change is more desperately urgent than ever, but we no longer know what "revolution" means. When asked, we tend to cough and sputter and try to change the subject. [...] our not-knowing is also the not-knowing of those who understand that not-knowing is part of the revolutionary process. We have lost all certainty, but the opening up of uncertainty is central to the revolution" (ibid., pp. 308-309).

Certainly, there is a fact that plays a central role in all this: the one Holloway grabbed, perhaps by transforming his desires for tequila, from a subjunctive, into a present indicative. Let's go to Hardt and Negri:

"Here we find again the republican principle in its primary manifestation: desertion, exodus, nomadism. [...] Battles against the Empire could be won through renunciation and defection. This defection has no place; it is the evacuation of the places of power.

» . . . What they really represent [(NGOs who) political action is based on a universal moral appeal: what is at stake is life itself] is force vital that sustains the people and thus transform politics into a matter of generic life, of life in all its generality. [...] Here, on this broader, more universal level, the activities of these NGOs coincide with the work of the Empire 'beyond politics', in the field of biopower, satisfying the needs of life itself" (Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 201 and 289).

9. According to Holloway:

"The crisis of the revolutionary subject is its liberation from knowledge.

» . . . Think of an anti-event policy rather than an organizational policy. [...] At best, such events are flashes against fetishism, festivals of the non-subordinate, carnivals of the oppressed, explosions of the pleasure principle, intimations of the *nunc stans*" (Holloway, *Changing the World Without Taking Power. The Meaning of Revolution Today*, pp. 304 and 307-308).

According to Hardt and Negri:

"The ontological fabric of Empire is constructed by that activity of multitudes that is beyond measure and their virtual powers. These constituent powers, virtual, are in permanent conflict with the constituted power of the Empire. They are completely positive since their position of "being against" is an attitude of "being for"; In other words, it is a resistance that translates into love and community. We are located precisely at that hinge of infinite finitude that links the virtual to the possible, walking the path that leads from desire to the future to come.

Instead of resigning itself to tailing the immediate needs of capital, political action expressing the general interests of the working class must force capital to realize its essential historical necessity, placing itself at the forefront of its centralization in ever-increasing areas of accumulation. That is, by forcing the formation of increasingly comprehensive spheres within which capital is absolutely centralized as directly social property, that is, of the state. Capital will consequently be forced to erase the differentiation in the conditions of production of labor power according to the productive subjectivity that demands it, currently established on the basis of the international fragmentation of the accumulation process. Moreover, over and above this still partial centralization, the political action of the working class is imposed tending to the absolute centralization of world capital in a world state, thus imposing absolute universality in the production of labor power. As a reproduction of the capitalist mode of production itself in the course of realizing its historical reason for existing, this centralization will not prevent the atrocities and barbarity of capital. On the contrary, it will show it in all its brutality. It's just that it is the necessary concrete form that its overcoming takes.

». . . In postmodernity we find ourselves again in the situation of St. Francis of Assisi and we propose against the misery of power, the joy of being. This is a revolution that no power can control, because biopower and communism, cooperation and revolution, continue to be united, in love, simplicity, and also innocence. This is the irrepressible lightness and joy of being a communist" (Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, pp. 329-330 and 374).

It is not in vain that Holloway, Hardt and Negri prefer not to look around them, thus avoiding seeing the revolutionary subject in the abominable forms it takes in the worker of the most developed productive subjectivity of large-scale industry – who, to begin with, cannot even today recognize himself as a member of the working class. Instead, they fulfill their ideological role in feeding this same appearance by selling us the romantic figures of the Zapatista peasant and St. Francis of Assisi as the prototype of the revolutionary subject. In reality, it is a peasant whose reproduction as a latent overpopulation for capital is governed by the political appearance of his return to the validity of direct personal relations and a mythical incarnation of the reaction of feudal society to the development of money relations. However romantically revolutionary they may seem, or precisely because they are, they are two subjects who compete with each other to see which of them reacts more vigorously to the advance of history that overwhelms them in a brutal way. And, very conveniently with regard to the real question, we are dealing with two defenseless subjects in developing the scientific consciousness of the general organization of social production. Moreover, only the infamy of the sycophant can pretend to reduce the hard road of struggle and suffering that the overcoming of capital imposes on the working class to a sweetened question of "carnivals of the oppressed, explosions of the pleasure principle", of "continuing to be united, in love, simplicity, and also innocence".